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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [KCUL](#) [SOCI](#) [CH](#)
SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR RAISES VOA BROADCASTS, INTERNET
CENSORSHIP WITH SCIO DIRECTOR CAI WU

Classified By: Ambassador Clark T. Randt, Jr. Reasons 1.4 (b/d)

Summary

1. (C) China's blocking of Voice of America radio and television broadcasts and censorship of United States Government Internet sites undermines the kinds of exchanges China itself wants to foster, the Ambassador told State Council Information Office Director Cai Wu on April 9. The programs and web sites in question are meant to encourage positive contacts, including among students and business people, that would benefit both countries. Cai pledged to do what he could to resolve the issue and to report the matter to relevant Government offices. Acknowledging that China takes steps to filter broadcast and online content related to the United States, Cai added that our two countries should nonetheless redouble efforts to stimulate increased exchanges. As for prospects for increased media openness, Cai said China is moving in the right direction, albeit at its own pace. He also stressed that China faces a dual challenge with the Internet. On one hand, the Government wants to encourage citizens to get online. On the other, authorities seek to "manage" the world wide web, that is, to make sure the content people see does not threaten social stability, Cai said. End Summary.

Blockages, Censorship Harm Exchanges

2. (C) Cai, who said he was jet-lagged following a lengthy trip to Latin America and the South Pacific, hosted the discussion at SCIO headquarters, located in the former Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The Ambassador led off by praising existing bilateral cooperation in the media realm and looking ahead to increased collaboration for the 2008 Summer Olympics in Beijing. But China's jamming of VOA television and radio broadcasts runs counter to this spirit of cooperation, the Ambassador stressed. Even two non-controversial television programs, on English-language education and American culture, respectively, have not been able to get official permission to air. In addition, China occasionally blocks access on the Mainland to some content on United States Embassy and Government web sites. There seems to be little rhyme or reason to the filtering, the Ambassador emphasized, noting that it sometimes targets information on education exchanges that would be useful to students. Our Foreign Commercial Service has reported that a number of American business' home pages, including one that sells Internet domain names, have also been blocked. Such restrictions on education and business information contradicts China's own statements about bolstering exchanges between our two countries, the

Ambassador warned.

13. (C) Cai responded that on these cases, he understands the Ambassador's points and will see what can be done to resolve them "according to China's laws and policies." He promised to report the matter to other relevant Government offices. In the broader scheme, Cai said he believes our two countries should do even more to enhance exchanges and that the positive direction in this regard is clear. Some success is already manifest in that our two societies know much more about each other now than 10 or 20 years ago, he said. At the same time, China remains in a disadvantageous position compared to the United States when it comes to media development. China must consider the effects that an influx of American media and culture would have on its society. As China goes through the process of developing its own mass media, it "naturally wants to have a managed regime" when it comes to imports from the United States. "We are not as sophisticated as you in these matters," Cai alleged.

14. (C) In a similar vein, Cai maintained that Chinese media treatment of the United States has been balanced and objective, while coverage of China by American outlets has been largely negative. The United States should "consider the effect of this on its own society," Cai remarked. The Ambassador rejected this assertion, stating that unfairly negative reporting about the United States abounds in Chinese language media. Retreating a bit, Cai added that in any case, information sources play an important role in shaping people's views.

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Views on Rights and Freedoms

15. (C) Turning to the larger question of increasing freedom and openness, Cai said China has made great strides over the years. China knows there are still problems, "but the trend is clear: we want to improve things," Cai said, without mentioning specifics. Cai held that Premier Wen Jiabao's February 27 article in the People's Daily was an important indicator of China's positive political direction. China and the United States often have disagreements on issues related to human rights, democracy and freedom, he offered. But Premier Wen's article, which Cai noted had appeared in the run-up to China's annual "two meetings" legislative season, stressed that China shares the United States' adherence to these principles, even if it is at a different stage in its development path.

16. (C) China is moving toward creating a society that enjoys freedom and democracy but is advancing at its own pace, Cai contended. In this context, the best way to achieve productive progress is through candid exchanges. One side should not believe their standards on rights issues are necessarily the correct standards. Using language we have heard repeatedly when discussing human rights with the Chinese, Cai suggested that the two sides should engage on the issue on the basis of mutual respect, not via accusations. He complained that the State Department's annual Human Rights report is "not helpful" in this regard.

The Internet

17. (C) Noting that China currently ranks second in the world after the United States in total number of

netizens at about 137 million, Cai said China faces a dual challenge when it comes to the Internet. China wants to develop the world wide web and encourage its use, particularly for educational and business purposes. The trend is unstoppable and China is building the high-tech infrastructure to ensure that there is increasing access to the information superhighway. At the same time, authorities see the need to "manage" the Internet to make sure inappropriate content does not harm society or stability, Cai said. He singled out pornography and cybercrime as particular areas of concern. China's approach to the world wide web is consistent with international practice, Cai claimed, adding that in this connection, China is researching and taking cues from how other countries approach management of Internet content through their laws. Nonetheless, Cai acknowledged that there is so much information online and so many web sites and blogs that it would be "impossible to control all content."

Travel to the United States

18. (C) Cai related that the SCIO's overall mission is to better explain China to the outside world. In the past, foreigners, including Americans, considered China and the Communist Party a "strange beast." Now, through issuing white papers and undertaking cultural exchanges, the SCIO is attempting to demystify China and its system. As part of this, Cai intends to visit the United States in May. He is scheduled to give a speech at the Los Angeles branch of the Asia Society and may also travel to Chicago.

Bio Notes

19. (C) Cai is an influential up-and-comer with connections to President Hu Jintao through his previous work at the Communist Youth League. In addition, he was classmates with Wang Jisi at Beijing University in the early 1980s. Wang, now dean of Beijing University's School of International Relations, is an informal advisor to President Hu Jintao on foreign policy issues. Although Cai earned a Ph.D. in politics and law, he took pains to emphasize that the focus of his studies was squarely on foreign affairs.

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